Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-2.    (Cancelled)

3.      (Currently Amended)  A text editing system comprising:

an electronic document generation module configured to allow a user to generate an electronic document, ; an input device configured to receive from [[a]] the user a predefined string of characters identifying the location of unknown information, and to enter into the electronic document a placeholder for the unknown information at the location specified by the user with the predefined string for entry into the electronic document, wherein the predefined string of characters represents information that is to be inserted into the electronic document;

an active messaging module configured to recognize the predefined string of characters as entered into the electronic document and, in response after recognizing in response the predefined string of characters, to automatically open a messaging window on a display that permits the user to compose a message requesting the unknown information that is to be inserted into the electronic document from one or more recipients.

4.      (Previously Presented) The system of claim 3 wherein said message window includes:

a context window, said context window to include a subset of said document proximate the location of said predefined string of characters.

5.      (Previously Presented)  The system of claim 4 wherein the active messaging module is further configured receive a response from a recipient and display the response to the user.

6.      (Previously Presented)  The system of claim 5 wherein the active messaging module is further configured to automatically integrate the response into the electronic document in response to receiving approval from the user.

7.      (Previously Presented) The system of claim 5 wherein the active messaging module is further configured to permit the user to edit the response.

8.      (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented <u>document editing</u> method comprising:

receiving a predefined string of characters into an electronic document entered by a user, wherein the predefined string of characters represents a~~user-defined~~ <u>a placeholder for</u> unknown <u>information</u>;

recognizing the predefined string using a first computing device, and, in response to recognizing the predefined string, automatically assembling a query that includes a set of context data extracted from a portion of the electronic document disposed proximate to ~~user-defined unknown~~ <u>the placeholder</u>;

transmitting the query to a database located remotely from the first computing device;

<u>identifying, from the context data included in the transmitted query, what information is unknown</u>;

searching the database for ~~information responsive to the user-defined~~ <u>the</u> unknown information ~~using information contained in the query~~; and

transmitting a response containing responsive information to the first computing device.

9.      (Previously Presented) The method of claim 8 further comprising:

automatically inserting the responsive information into the electronic document in response to receiving an approval from the user.

10. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 7 wherein the active messaging module is further configured to automatically integrate an edited response into the electronic document.

11-26. (Cancelled)

27. (New) The system of claim 3 wherein the predefined string of characters comprises text typed by the user into the electronic document.

28. (New) A method of editing a text document, the method comprising:

opening an electronic document with a document editing program;

manually entering a predefined string of characters into the open text document, causing the document editing program to recognize the entered string of characters as a placeholder for missing information, and in response to recognizing the string of characters, to open a messaging window;

generating in the messaging window a query regarding the missing information;

forwarding the query to one or more identified recipients;

saving the electronic document on a computing device;

receiving a response to the query; and

automatically updating the saved document to contain information contained within the response.

29. (New) The method of claim 28 wherein the message window includes a portion of the electronic document surrounding the placeholder.

30.    (New) The method of claim 29 further comprising enabling the user to vary the portion of the electronic document that is included in the message window.

31.    (New) The method of claim 29 wherein the message further includes a messaging area in which the user can enter a message to one or more recipients.

32.    (New) The method of claim 28 wherein the one or more recipients includes a person.

33.    (New) The method of claim 28 wherein the predefined string of characters consists of a single character.

34.    (New) The method of claim 28 further comprising, after receiving the response, displaying the response to the user and enabling the user to approve the response before automatically updating the saved document.

35.    (New) The method of claim 28 wherein the predefined string of characters consists of a string of alphanumeric characters.

36.    (New) The method of claim 28 wherein automatically updating the saved document comprises replacing the placeholder with the information contained within the response.

37.    (New) The method of claim 36 wherein automatically updating the saved document further comprises replacing information proximate the placeholder.

38.    (New) The method of claim 28 wherein the predefined string of characters comprises typed text.

39.    (New) The method of claim 28 wherein the query is forwarded to a person, a web agent, a database, or a data mining engine.


40.    (New) The method of claim 28 wherein the identified recipients include the user.